



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

**Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Cambridge House Grammar School
Ballymena**

October 2012

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF CAMBRIDGE HOUSE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT42 2EH (341-0297)

The Education and Training Inspectorate visited Cambridge House Grammar School on 13 and 14 April 2011, and, as a result, the school entered the formal intervention process on 3 June 2011. The focus of the inspection was to evaluate and report on the quality of the provision within the sixth form, including: learning and teaching; careers education information advice and guidance (CEIAG) and pastoral care. The Department of Education indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, a follow-up visit would evaluate the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements¹ in the sixth form provision.

After the action plan was received an initial visit was carried out by inspectors on 2 February 2012, as a result of which the action plan was adjusted. An interim follow-up visit took place on 21 and 22 March 2012.

In the interval since the original inspection the school has received support², from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB), and the following changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- there is currently uncertainty of tenure of some of the senior leadership positions and instability in governance as a result of the following positions being filled in an acting capacity: Principal; vice-principal; and chair and vice-chair of governors;
- a head and an assistant head of careers have recently been appointed;
- new heads of biology, information and communication technology, technology and design and the sixth form have been appointed;
- there have been five further staff changes, including four redundancies; and
- sport studies and psychology are no longer part of the sixth form curriculum.

The most important improvements since the inspection include:

- the proportion of pupils achieving three or more General Certificate of Education Advanced (A) levels at grades A* to C, although still well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar selective schools, has improved significantly from 40% at the time of the original inspection in 2011 to 57%;
- there have been improvements in almost all of the individual subjects at A level since the original inspection;
- the leadership of biology has improved, and standards at General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) in the subject and are now at the NI average;

¹ See the keys findings and areas for improvement reported in the Report of an Inspection Visit in April 2011 for further details.

² Mentoring support has been provided by senior staff from another school in the NEELB, professional development has been provided by the Regional Training Unit, and C2K have provided support relating to the effective use of assessment data.

- the planning for learning and teaching has been reviewed and developed across all of the subjects in the sixth form and, in the best practice, the teachers' planning identifies appropriately effective approaches to be used;
- most of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection were either good or very good, demonstrating improvement in the quality of the pupils' learning experiences;
- available and relevant data is now used systematically to set targets and track the academic progress of the pupils in the sixth form;
- the leadership and the provision of CEIAG in the sixth form are now very good;
- there is now a coherent and progressive CEIAG programme that provides the pupils with appropriate advice and guidance in order to help them make informed A level, and career, choices;
- there is now appropriate access to a two-year programme of study for all pupils in the sixth form; and
- the proportion of pupils leaving school at the end of year 13 fell significantly in 2012 as a result of the removal of the criterion of entry to year 14 and of improved careers advice.

Since the interim follow-up visit, leadership roles and responsibilities of the members of the senior leadership team (SLT) have been clarified. The SLT now challenge and support the work of middle leaders more effectively and strategically and, under the effective leadership of the acting-vice-principal, monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision and outcomes to identify actions to effect improvement. At all levels, leaders demonstrate a commitment to the improvement agenda.

In the areas inspected in the original inspection, the overall quality of education is now satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the sixth form provision. However, the inspection identifies areas for further improvement in standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the pupils are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement are outlined below.

- Standards in public examinations require considerable improvement at all levels. At A level, attainment in some subjects is still not high enough, including biology, chemistry and English. Over the past two years, the percentage of pupils achieving seven or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics has fallen from 80% to 62%³.
- Teachers need to use the available data effectively across the school to raise further their expectations of what the pupils can achieve, and to inform their planning in order to improve the learning and teaching, and ultimately raise standards.

³ The original inspection, and subsequent follow-up inspection, focused primarily on evaluating and reporting on the quality of the provision within the sixth form, including: learning and teaching; CEIAG and pastoral care.

- Leaders at all levels need to ensure a more consistent approach, within and across disciplines and key stages, to the school's work in improving the quality of learning and teaching in order to improve standards

The employing authority, governors and staff need to continue to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school's provision and budget in order to: address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff; and sustain the improvements already made and attend to the areas for improvement. In addition, the current uncertainty in tenure of some of the senior leadership posts and instability in the governance of the school needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

Based upon the findings reported here, and including a focus on biology, chemistry and English across the school, the Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within 12-18 months and publish a report.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2012

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website:
www.etini.gov.uk

